



BREAD AND JAM.

BY HENRY BACON.

IT happened in France.

Two little girls were on their way to school one morning in the summer-time. These little girls lived with their mother on the boundary of the village, and their school was in the village, so they had a long walk along a solitary road between their home and the "Sister's" school, as it was called, for the teacher was a Sister of Charity.

Each of these little girls had a basket on her arm, and in each basket were large slices of white bread, stuck together with plum-jam.

They were very fond of white bread made of wheat flour, for the principal food at their home was black-bread, which was made of buckwheat; and they considered white bread a luxury.

Later in the year, each would have had a big rosy apple to eat with the bread, instead of jam, but the apples were not ripe—as yet they were hardly larger than cherries. These little children were not sorry, however, for they liked plum-jam much better than an apple, even the ripest, rosiest apple. There was no danger the jam would soil their school-books, for they had none,—their lessons were written by the Sister with chalk on a blackboard, and they had no need of books.

Hand in hand, these little girls were trudging along the solitary road, when, turning a corner, they saw before them a man sitting on a log, with his head buried in his hands. The children were not much frightened; why should they be, by a man resting upon the side of the road? No one had ever harmed them. They could not see the man's face, but, thinking he must be some one they knew, they went on fearlessly, stopping when they were opposite the stranger.

The man did not stir, and they looked at him in silence for some seconds.

"What is the matter?" asked Marie, the elder.

The man raised his head slightly, and looked at the children. They could see his eyes shining through the long hair that hung about his face.

"Hungry," he answered in a voice between a whine and a growl.

Louise, the little sister, was frightened; the man's eyes reminded her of the wolf,—the wolf that she had heard about, that met Little Red-Ridinghood on the road as she was going to see her grandmother,—and so she was frightened. Away she ran, scampering down the road toward

the village as fast as she could. Marie also was frightened: not so much as her little sister, but she did not like being left alone with the stranger, and so she followed the younger sister, not looking behind her until they were again hand in hand. Then both looked back; the man had not stirred from his seat on the log.

"He is hungry," said Marie.

"Yes, he is hungry," repeated Louise.

"He must be very hungry," said Marie.

"Yes, he must be very hungry," repeated little Louise.

"It must be terrible to be so hungry," said Marie, standing motionless in the road, and still looking back.

"Yes, it must be terrible," Louise repeated again, pulling hard at her sister to prevent her standing still.

"Suppose we give him some of our luncheon," said Marie.

"And what would we do at noon?" asked Louise, opening her basket and looking in, to assure herself that her bread and jam were safe.

"Don't you remember, the Sister told us if we helped others, we would be provided for? Let us give the man some of our bread."

"But the plum-jam?" questioned Louise.

"Perhaps he likes jam," said her sister.

"So do I," half whimpered Louise.

"And then, the good Sister told us, the other day, about Saint Elizabeth. Don't you remember how, when she gave her best cloak to a beggar, she found another—a better one—hanging up in her room?"

"But the beggar did not eat up her cloak; it was not like bread and jam."

"No, but if we give our luncheon to the beggar, perhaps,—perhaps at noon we shall find a better luncheon in our basket, just as Saint Elizabeth found a better cloak when her husband sent for her to come down and see the kings who had come to make them a visit."

"Are you *sure*, Marie?"

"No, not *sure*, but *perhaps*. Let us try."

"I wish you would say *sure*."

"Sure!" said Marie.

"Say it again!" exclaimed Louise.

"Sure!" repeated her sister.

"He shall have my luncheon, then; but must

we go back? Let us put it down here, and then run. He will find it, like the birds."

Marie was not willing to leave the luncheon on the ground and then run, as her sister wished. She had listened to many wonderful stories, and wished that something wonderful might happen through her. Then, she thought, perhaps there might some day be another Saint Marie, and other little children would be told the story of this saint, and of her charities when a child. But it was not all vanity with this peasant child, for Marie's nature

into his mouth, Louise held out her portion: "Now, mine."

The man, whose hunger was somewhat appeased, and whose mouth was too full to speak, shook his head.

"Now, mine," insisted Louise, looking disappointed at the refusal.

"No," said the man, as soon as he could, still refusing, for now he was no longer terribly hungry, he was somewhat ashamed of having taken the child's luncheon.



"THEY SAW BEFORE THEM A MAN SITTING ON A LOG, WITH HIS HEAD BURIED IN HIS HANDS."

was kind and charitable. So, clinging to one another, back they went to feed the hungry.

"Did you say you were hungry?" asked Marie, when they had come nearer, but were still at a safe distance from the stranger.

"He is asleep," whispered Louise, for the man took no notice of the question.

"Here is something to eat," persisted Marie, thrusting her lunch almost into the man's face.

The man suddenly startled the children. With a low cry, he snatched the food, which he instantly began to devour like a wild animal. The children stood watching the hungry man, and as he stuffed the last morsel of Marie's bread and jam

"Now, mine," insisted Louise, thrusting her offering into the man's hands, and, as one child's luncheon was not much for a hungry tramp, and she would not be denied, he took a large bite through both slices of the bread and jam. It almost brought the tears to the eyes of Louise as she saw them going,—still, Marie had said "*Sure!*" But suppose Marie should be mistaken?

When recess came, the Sister told her pupils they could get their baskets and eat their luncheon in the school-yard, under the trees. Standing at the school-room door, the teacher watched over the children. Soon she noticed Marie and Louise sitting at the foot of one of the trees, their heads

close together, Marie looking very sad, and Louise crying. They had made themselves comfortable on the ground before opening their baskets, confident they should find a good luncheon—and both baskets were empty!

"Saint Elizabeth has forgotten us!" exclaimed Marie.

"But you said 'sure,' twice," whimpered Louise, and began to cry and say she was hungry.

"Why do you not eat your luncheon?" asked the Sister.

"Saint Elizabeth has forgotten us," answered Marie.

"And Marie said 'sure,' twice!"

It was with much difficulty that the Sister led the children to give an intelligible account of their attempt at charity. When at last she understood, she said:

"Wait; I will see. Perhaps you are not forgotten, after all," and she went into the house, leaving the children wondering.

Soon, the teacher returned, holding in her hand a large piece of bread which she broke into halves, giving a piece to each of the sisters.

"There, children, you see you have been remembered," and so saying, she left them to enjoy their lunch.

"But Saint Elizabeth has forgotten the jam!" exclaimed Louise, after taking a bite and finding it was only dry bread.

"Perhaps she did not know there was jam on our bread."

"The good Sister ought to have told her."

"She could not," explained Marie, adding, "I never tasted such nice bread before."

But little Louise did not echo as usual, for, to her, dry bread without jam was simply dry bread, and it may have been Marie's imagination that helped her to enjoy her crust.

The adventure was told over again to the mother when the children went home from school.

"Was it not kind of Saint Elizabeth to have remembered us, after all, Mother?" asked Marie, when she had finished.

"She forgot the plum-jam," said Louise.

"But suppose Saint Elizabeth was obliged to go hungry!" exclaimed the practical peasant mother.

"Surely not Saint Elizabeth, mother?"

"Some one must have gone hungry; probably the Sister gave you what she had intended to eat herself."

"And was it not Saint Elizabeth?" asked Marie.

"I was so sure it came from her."

"Not unless the good Sister is so named. No, my dear, when the Sister saw you were hungry, she gave to you out of her frugal store. My dears, it was very sweet of you, to wish to feed the hungry man. But remember, when you give, that you must not do so in the hope of being rewarded. That is not charity. Neither is it charity to give bread to one and take from the mouth of another. Probably the good Sister went hungry."

"I am so sorry," Marie said, disappointed and repentant, bursting into tears.

Louise only pouted and muttered to herself:

"But she forgot the jam!"

